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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan dailies focused their coverage May 12 on U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's remarks at a congressional hearing Wednesday, President Chen Shui-bian's return trip, AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young's speech at an American Chamber of Commerce luncheon Thursday, and the interrogation of the Financial Supervisory Commission chairman by the Investigation Bureau. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a front-page banner headline that read "U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Harshly Criticizes Bian," and the pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged "U.S. Deputy Secretary of State: Challenging One China, Taiwan Running into a Wall." The newspaper also ran a banner headline on page two that said "Stephen Young: Constitutional Amendments Must Not Touch on Taiwan Independence." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, also ran a banner headline on page three that read "U.S. Deputy Secretary of State: Supports Taiwan But Does Not Encourage Taiwan Independence." The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" front-paged "United States Understands that President [Chen's] Decision Not to Transit Is Aimed at Foreign Relations."

¶2. Most Taiwan papers editorialized on Zoellick's remarks and Taipei-Washington relations. A "Liberty Time" editorial criticized the pan-Blue camp's logic that opposes Chen and Taiwan-centered values. A "Taiwan Daily" editorial cited Zoellick's remarks and said it showed Washington's determination to defend Taiwan. An opinion piece in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Time" urged both Taiwan and Washington to focus on the long-term game, and an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said Chen's Libya transit deserves support. A "China Times" editorial asked if the U.S.-Taiwan relations really remain intact, and a "United Daily News" editorial said Chen is walking a dangerous road to self-marginalization. End summary.

A) "Taiwan People Cannot Accept Defeatist Thinking"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (5/12):

"... Emotional confrontations have occurred between Taiwan and the United States lately. A high-ranking Taiwan diplomatic official said in public that '[Taiwan] does not want to be a lackey of the United States,' so it is not surprising that [Deputy Secretary of State Robert] Zoellick made some harsh remarks [against Taiwan]. But Zoellick also highly praised Taiwan's democracy during the congressional hearing and asked why China cannot achieve it while Taiwan can. ... In short, given the pan-Blue camp's long-standing thinking that opposes Bian and Taiwan-centered values, the negative effect of [Chen's] transit of Libya or Zoellick's remarks have been deliberately amplified, while they hardly pay attention to the aspects that are favorable for Taiwan. If Taiwan is to act according to the pan-Blue camp's logic, it would be like imposing

restrictions on itself, and all it can do is to wait for China to annex the island. Are the Taiwan people willing to accept such defeatist thinking?"

B) "Taiwan-U.S. Relations Remain Intact in Wake of 'Trip of Peace and Prosperity; President Chen Has Striven for Foreign Relations and Wins National Dignity! - Looking at Development of Bilateral Ties from U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick's and AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young's Remarks"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] editorialized (5/12):

"... U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick and AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young both talked about the triangular relationship between Taipei, Washington and Beijing yesterday, and their remarks may serve as a footnote for A-bian's trip to strive for [Taiwan's] foreign relations. ... It is noteworthy that Zoellick was addressing U.S. Representatives, the international community, and more importantly, China. It was thus necessary [for him] to reiterate [Washington's] positions. What's special was that one can sense the United States' emotions when he mentioned that '[Taiwan] independence means war. ...' His next sentence: 'And that means American soldiers will sacrifice their lives ...' however, indicated U.S. determination to defend Taiwan and a warning to China that it must not act rashly. ..."

C) "US, Taiwan Must Focus on the Long-term Game"

Paul Lin, a political commentator based in New York, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (5/12):

"The troubles surrounding President Chen Shui-bian's visit to Latin America have highlighted Taiwan's difficult diplomatic situation. One could say that this is the most tragically heroic overseas visit by a government official since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) came to power in 2000. The tragedy this time lies mainly in the US' restrictions, since Chinese pressure and blue camp obstruction is part of the daily routine. It is indeed a tragedy for Taiwan that the US, an ideological ally, would strike out at it. In this situation, it was heroic not to give and shrink away from offending one's ally in order to maintain national dignity.

"Chen is the popularly elected president of Taiwan, and the US government is constantly urging China to engage with Taiwan's democratically elected government, something China is unwilling to do. When the US government treats Taiwan's president with less than the full respect he deserves, isn't this tantamount to playing into the hands of China? ..."

D) "President Chen's Libya Initiative Deserves Support"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (5/12):

"The successful visit made by President Chen Shui-bian Wednesday to Libya is worthy of approval by Taiwan's people as a rare major diplomatic breakthrough for our external relations in an era of incessant oppression by the hostile People's Republic of China. ... President Chen's 'Libya' initiative is fully in keeping with the approach adopted by the United States and the United Nations and can hardly be accurately described as 'tantamount to breaking up with the U.S.' or as giving assistance to a 'terrorist' nation. ..."

E) "What Gain from This 'Surprise Trip'?"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (5/12):

"... Having experienced the impact created by [Chen's] trip, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started to chant from time to time that Taiwan-U.S. relations have remained intact. We of course hope so, too. But anyone can sense something wrong after having learned about Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's testimony at the U.S. Congress Wednesday. Zoellick hardly polished his criticism against Taiwan this time. He directly refuted Chen's remarks that there is a precondition for his 'Five Nos' pledge; he believes that

'China hasn't used force to attack Taiwan' and that since Chen has made his pledge, he has to stick to it. But what was going on, Zoellick said, 'is an effort to kind of erode, and knock sort of at the edge and sand it off,' so the United States has to 'hold people to their terms and words.' Zoellick also said 'Taiwan keeps running into a wall!' Zoellick's ranking is high enough, right? Didn't these sentences clearly explain why President Bush not allow Chen to 'transit New York?' Does the 'cessation of the National Unification Council' really have nothing to do with his transits? Do U.S.-Taiwan relations remain intact? Read Zoellick's remarks more carefully! ..."

F) "The More Mistakes One Makes, the Braver One Becomes: Chen Shui-bian Walks Dangerous Road of Self-Marginalization"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] commented in an editorial (5/12):

"... Judging from the entire diplomatic strategic layout, Chen managed to maintain his face at the expense of breaking with Taiwan's most important ally, the United States, and he even made friends with the notorious Qadhafi. Whether this move is a gain or loss for Taiwan is without question. As a matter of fact, this diplomatic fireworks show put on by the President to break his low approval rating perhaps will not only bring long-term, stable interests for Taiwan but will also result in a period of freezing in Taipei-Washington relations. This will be something else that Chen will be held responsible for in the wake of the 'cessation of the National Unification Council.' Chen's paranoid behavior during his trip can be generally classified into three deviations: First, he deviated from Taiwan's interests and the diplomatic mainstream, whose axis is the United States. Second, he deviated from the universal values of democracy. Third, he deviated from the expectations of mainstream public opinion. The three deviations show that Chen is walking a dangerous road of self-marginalization. ..."

YOUNG